For Immediate Release

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RETROSPECTIVE OF FILMS BY WARREN SONBERT AT SFMOMA

Newly Restored and Recently Rediscovered Works Highlighted

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) will present a retrospective of the work of the late avant-garde filmmaker Warren Sonbert (1947–1995) from October 26 through December 17, 2000. *Friendly Witnesses: The Worlds of Warren Sonbert* features a selection of newly restored films, from the rarely seen *Amphetamine*, 1966, made when Sonbert was a teenager, through *Whiplash*, 1997, completed according to his instructions after his death from AIDS. The series also features recently rediscovered films, including *The Tenth Legion*, 1967, and *The Tuxedo Theatre*, 1968, as well as experimental and narrative works by other filmmakers that place Sonbert's oeuvre in a larger social and creative context. The exhibition, originally presented at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, contains new prints struck from internegatives preserved under the auspices of the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS working with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and using the filmmaker's camera originals and original prints.

Eight different programs detailing the influences, styles and themes of the filmmaker's work—for example, *Early Influences: Andy Warhol and Gerard Malanga* and *Sonbert's Queer Aesthetic*—will be presented on Sundays at 1 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. in the Museum's Phyllis Wattis Theater (see attached schedule for details). There will also be a panel discussion, *Themes and Variations: Warren Sonbert's Approach to Narrative*, moderated by SFMOMA Curator of Media Arts Benjamin Weil, with guest curator Jon Gartenberg and other panelists on Sunday, October 29, at 2 p.m. (call 415/357-4130 for further information). Both the film programs and the panel discussion are free with Museum admission.

A Personal Filmmaker

Largely identified with a personal, diaristic form of independent filmmaking, Warren Sonbert was a key figure in the history of American avant-garde cinema. Traveling widely with his camera, the filmmaker developed a style of recording and editing footage that enabled him to transform, in seemingly effortless fashion, his globe-trotting images into exquisitely modulated visual symphonies of ritual, performance and suggestion. Based in San Francisco

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from the 1970s onward, Sonbert was also a prolific theoretician and critic who wrote on opera and music, poetry, painting and Hollywood cinema for numerous Bay Area publications. In all his work, Sonbert demonstrated a probing and playful examination of the fundamental interplay between the diverse, creative worlds he inhabited.

Sonbert began making films in 1966, while a student at New York University. These first films were inspired by the denizens of the Warhol art scene and feature Warhol superstars René Ricard and Gerard Malanga. In the late 1960s, he began to incorporate footage from his worldwide travels together with sections from earlier films. In later films, such as *A Woman's Touch*, 1983, and *Friendly Witness*, 1989, he built upon his early experiments in camera movement, lighting and framing to create brilliantly edited masterworks through which he commented about art and industry, news reportage and its effects on our lives and other contemporary issues. The exhibition also contrasts Sonber''s films with those of his contemporaries, filmmakers who inspired him and others who were influenced by him in turn, including Andy Warhol, Stan Brakhage, Gregory Markopoulos, Jeff Scher, Nathaniel Dorsky, Abigail Child, Alfred Hitchcock, and Douglas Sirk.

This presentation of *Friendly Witnesses: The Worlds of Warren Sonbert* was organized by Gartenberg Media Enterprises in conjunction with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition and preservation of Sonbert's work was originally organized in conjunction with The Estate Project for Artists with AIDS, the Academy Film Archive and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

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Hours: Open daily (except Wednesdays) 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; open late Thursdays until 9 p.m.; summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day) 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day.

Admission prices: Adults $9; seniors $6; students $5. SFMOMA members and children twelve and under are admitted free. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free. Thursday evenings, 6 to 9 p.m., admission is half price.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by MUNI, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans and Caltrain. Hourly, daily and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415/348-0971.

Visit our Web site at www.sfmoma.org or call 415/357-4000 for more information.

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is a private, not-for-profit institution supported by its members, individual contributors to Donor Circle, corporate and foundation support, federal and state government grants and admission revenues. Annual programming is sustained through the generosity of Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund and The James Irvine Foundation. Thursday evening half-priced admission is sponsored by Banana Republic. Reduced admission for seniors is sponsored by Pacific Bell. KidstART free admission for children twelve and under is made possible by The Charles Schwab Corporation Foundation. Additional support has been provided by the Carole and Robert McNeil Docent Award in honor of Benjamin McKendall Jr., 1999 award recipient.

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FRIENDLY WITNESSES: THE WORLDS OF WARREN SONBERT

Screening Schedule: October 26–December 17, 2000

Thursday, October 26, 7 p.m. - Premiere
Program 1
Transformations of Style: From Mise-en-Scene to Montage
Warren Sonbert, *The Tenth Legion*, 1967, 30 min.
Warren Sonbert, *The Tuxedo Theatre*, 1968, silent, 21 min.

Sunday, October 29, 1 p.m.
Program 1
Transformations of Style: From Mise-en-Scène to Montage
Warren Sonbert, *The Tenth Legion*, 1967, 30 min.
Warren Sonbert, *The Tuxedo Theatre*, 1968, silent, 21 min.

Sunday, October 29, 2– 4 p.m.
Themes and Variations: Warren Sonbert's Approach to Narrative
Panel discussion, moderated by SFMOMA Curator of Media Arts Benjamin Weil, featuring guest curator Jon Gartenberg and other participants to be announced. Please call the Media Arts Department at 415/357-4130 for details.

Sunday, October 29, 4:30 p.m.
Program 2
Intimate Couplings
Warren Sonbert, *The Bad and The Beautiful*, 1967, 34 min.
Warren Sonbert, *Ted and Jessica*, 1967, 4 min. [fragment]
Warren Sonbert, *Honor and Obey*, 1988, silent, 21 min.

Sunday, November 5, 1 p.m.
Program 3
Early Influences: Andy Warhol and Gerard Malanga
Warren Sonbert , *Where Did Our Love Go*, 1966, 15 min.
Warren Sonbert , *Hall of Mirrors*, 1966, 7 min.
Gerard Malanga, *In Search of the Miraculous*, 1967, 30 min.
Andy Warhol, *Vinyl*, 1965, b&w, 64 min.

Sunday, November 5, 3:30 p.m.
Program 4
Sonbert's Queer Aesthetic
Warren Sonbert and Wendy Appel, *Amphetamine*, 1966, b&w, 10 min.
Warren Sonbert , *Noblesse Oblige*, 1981, silent, 25 min.
Warren Sonbert , *Whiplash*, 1995/1997, 20 min.

Sunday, November 12, 1 p.m.
Program 5
Gregory Markopoulos as Mentor, Stan Brakhage as Hero
Warren Sonbert, *Rude Awakening*, 1976, silent, 36 min.
Stan Brakhage, *The Riddle of Lumen*, 1972, silent, 17 min.
Stan Brakhage, *Mothlight*, 1963, silent, 4 min.
Gregory Markopoulos, *Twice a Man*, 1963, 49 min.

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Sunday, November 12, 3:30 p.m.
Program 3
Early Influences: Andy Warhol and Gerard Malanga
Warren Sonbert , *Where Did Our Love Go*, 1966, 15 min.
Warren Sonbert , *Hall of Mirrors*, 1966, 7 min.
Gerard Malanga, *In Search of the Miraculous*, 1967, 30 min.
Andy Warhol, *Vinyl*, 1965, b&w, 64 min.

Sunday, November 19, 1 p.m.
Program 4
Sonbert's Queer Aesthetic
Warren Sonbert and Wendy Appel, *Amphetamine*, 1966, b&w, 10 min.
Warren Sonbert , *Noblesse Oblige*, 1981, silent, 25 min.
Warren Sonbert , *Whiplash*, 1995/1997, 20 min.

Sunday, November 19, 3:30 p.m.
Program 2
Intimate Couplings
Warren Sonbert, *The Bad and The Beautiful*, 1967, 34 min.
Warren Sonbert, *Ted and Jessica*, 1967, 4 min. [fragment]
Warren Sonbert, *Honor and Obey*, 1988, silent, 21 min.

Sunday, November 26, 1 p.m.
Program 6
Filmed Images as Found Footage: Stanzas of Music
Warren Sonbert, *Carriage Trade*, 1972, silent, 61 min.
Warren Sonbert, *Short Fuse*, 1992, 37 min.

Sunday, November 26, 3:30 p.m.
Program 5
Gregory Markopoulos as Mentor, Stan Brakhage as Hero
Warren Sonbert, *Rude Awakening*, 1976, silent, 36 min.
Stan Brakhage, *The Riddle of Lumen*, 1972, silent, 17 min.
Stan Brakhage, *Mothlight*, 1963, silent, 4 min.
Gregory Markopoulos, *Twice a Man*, 1963, 49 min.

Sunday, December 3, 1 p.m.
Program 7
Cases in Point: Sonbert's Creative Interaction with Experimental Filmmakers Abigail Child, Nathanial Dorsky, and Jeff Scher
Warren Sonbert, *Friendly Witness*, 1989, 22 min.
Nathaniel Dorsky, *Hours for Jerome*, Part 2, 1980-82, silent, 24 min.
Jeff Scher, *Reasons to Be Glad*, 1980, 4 min.
Abigail Child, *Mercy*, 1989, 10 min.
Jeff Scher, *Postcards from Warren*, 1999, 1 min.
Jeff Scher, *Warren*, 1991, 3 min.

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Sunday, December 3, 3:30 p.m.
Program 6
Filmed Images as Found Footage: Stanzas of Music
Warren Sonbert, *Carriage Trade*, 1972, silent, 61 min.
Warren Sonbert, *Short Fuse*, 1992, 37 min.

Sunday, December 10, 1 p.m.
Program 8
Sonbert and Hitchcock: Narrative from a Woman's Point of View
Warren Sonbert, *A Woman's Touch*, 1983, silent, 22 min.
Alfred Hitchcock, *Marnie*, 1964, 35 mm, 129 min.

Sunday, December 10, 3:30 p.m.
Program 7
Cases in Point: Sonbert's Creative Interaction with Experimental Filmmakers Abigail Child, Nathanial Dorsky, and Jeff Scher
Warren Sonbert, *Friendly Witness*, 1989, 22 min.
Nathaniel Dorsky, *Hours for Jerome*, Part 2, 1980-82, silent, 24 min.
Jeff Scher, *Reasons to Be Glad*, 1980, 4 min.
Abigail Child, *Mercy*, 1989, 10 min.
Jeff Scher, *Postcards from Warren*, 1999, 1 min.
Jeff Scher, *Warren*, 1991, 3 min.

Sunday, December 17, 1 p.m.
Program 4
Sonbert's Queer Aesthetic
Warren Sonbert and Wendy Appel, *Amphetamine*, 1966, b&w, 10 min.
Warren Sonbert , *Noblesse Oblige*, 1981, silent, 25 min.
Warren Sonbert , *Whiplash*, 1995/1997, 20 min.

Sunday, December 17, 3:30 p.m.
Program 8
Sonbert and Hitchcock: Narrative from a Woman's Point of View
Warren Sonbert, *A Woman's Touch*, 1983, silent, 22 min.
Alfred Hitchcock, *Marnie*, 1964, 35 mm, 129 min.

All works are 16mm film, color, and sound unless otherwise noted. Schedule is subject to change. Call 415 357-4130 for final details. Film programs are free with museum admission.

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